

The Body of Christ

God gives many pictures to us of the church to help us to understand this mysterious organism. Each picture is meant to assist us in appreciating certain aspects of the church that make it God's treasure. The thing that they all have in common is the individual finding purpose and function within the context of the many.

The Vine -- There is one vine, but many branches.

The Family of God -- There is one family, but many children (sons).

The Temple of God -- There is one temple, but many living stones.

The Army of God -- There is one army, but many soldiers.

The Body of Christ -- There is one body, but many members.

Key Verses

John 1:14-16

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full** of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" 16 And **of His fullness** we have all received, and grace for grace.*

Jesus was full of grace and truth. He came as the fullness of the Godhead bodily and the fullness of Him to fill all with all. We will see that in this picture of the church as the body of Christ, we have each received **of His fullness**.

John 16:7

*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to **your advantage** that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*

It was to their advantage because when Jesus was here on earth He was limited to being able to minister in one place, at one time, to one set of circumstances. With Him leaving and sending the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us it was possible for Him to duplicate His ministry in us and be able to minister world-wide all at the same time.

Acts 2:1-2

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Verse 3 – Wuest New Testament

...and they saw tongues of what looked like fire distributing themselves over the assembly, and on the head of each person a tongue alighted.

In the manifestation of fire we have a visual or natural illustration of what is happening in the spiritual realm. The fullness that was in Christ being separated and distributed among His followers.

Ephesians 4:11-16

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the **measure** of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, AND GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."... 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness** of Christ...*

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

Verse 1-3

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 1 – Should read “concerning spirituals” or “concerning spiritual things.”

Paul is going to talk to us about three categories of spiritual things.

- He is going to talk to us about Gifts or supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit.
- He is going to talk to us about Ministries that come to us from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He is going to talk to us about activities or, literally “energies” that come from God, the Father.

Before he does this he gives us this outline in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Verse 4-6

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

The following chart will help us to visualize what if to follow:

Source	Holy Spirit	Jesus	Father
Grace Given	Gifts or Manifestations	Ministries or Functions	Motivations or Energies
Greek Word	<i>Charisma</i>	<i>Diakonia</i>	<i>Energeima</i>
English Equivalent	Gift of Grace or Favor	Ministry, Service or Function	Workings, Effects or Energies

Key Verses	1 Corinthians 12:7-11	1 Corinthians 12:12-30	1 Corinthians 13-14
Examples	Word of Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healings, Miracles, Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation, Discerning of Spirits	Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher, Giver, Shower of Mercy Exhorter, Helper, Healer, Etc.	Love Edification

Paul begins by discussing the manifestation of the Holy Spirit which are an outshining of the Holy Spirit made available to all believers when needed at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 7-11

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Next he moves to a discussion of the ministries or functions that we have as members of the Body of Christ. These could be described as the gift or ministry of Christ that has been given to each of us. It is that portion of the ministry of Christ that has been given to us and for which we will have to give an account. It is a lifetime call or ministry for which we were created that is to be recognized, developed and fulfilled by each member of the Body of Christ.

When Christ ascended on high His ministry was broken down and distributed to His followers or disciples. Christ was the fullness of all ministry. Each of us has received a portions of that fullness.

Christ was the whole and as such He was:

- THE Apostle (Hebrews 3:1)
- THE Prophet (John 4:19)
- THE Evangelist (Luke 4:18)
- THE Pastor (John 10:11)
- THE Teacher (John 3:2)
- THE Exhorter (Luke 2:25)
- THE Giver (Galatians 2:20)
- THE Ruler (Luke 1:33)
- THE Shower of Mercy (Hebrews 2:17)
- THE Worker of Miracles (John 11:47)
- THE Healer (Luke 6:17-19)
- THE Deliverer (Matthew 1:21)
- THE Governor (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- THE Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25)

Now Christ functions through the Church which is His body. Our ministry is merely an expression of “Christ in us” (Col. 1:27). We are the only hands that Jesus has.

One Body with Many Members

Verse 12-27

*For as the body is one and has many members, but **all** the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were **all** baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have **all** been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?*

18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,

25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

Seven Steps to Finding My Place

1. Recognize that you do have a place of function and responsibility before the Lord.

Every single member has a function (I Cor. 12:7, 11, 18). There is no such thing as a non-functioning member. Regardless what some may think and regardless of our natural understanding, everything was made with purpose and design (example of appendix and tonsils).

*But now God has set the members, **each one** of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

I Corinthians 12:18

2. Recognize that God has made you perfectly suited to the ministry to which He has called you (Eph. 2:8-10).

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The natural body serves as an example. Each member of the natural body was made with a specific function in mind.

- a. The hand = grasping
- b. The foot = walking
- c. The heart = pumping blood
- d. The liver = cleansing purifying
- e. The ear = collecting (wax) sound

When God made you, He made you with purpose in mind. He had purpose in mind when He designed you:

- a. Emotions
- b. Abilities and Aptitudes
- c. Intellectual Abilities (IQ)
- d. Stature and Appearance
- e. Heritage and Genealogy

Any unchangeable attribute that we possess must be seen as part of God's positioning us and equipping us for fulfilling the good work that He has in mind for us to do. If God could have made you any better suited for that to which you were called, He would have done it.

3. Recognize that it is God who equips you with the gifts necessary to fulfill your unique ministry.

§ God gives the measure of faith (Rom. 12:3).

§ God gives us grace or divine enablement (Rom. 12:3).

§ God gives gifts differing (Rom. 12:6; I Pet. 4:10).

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. I Peter 4:10

*God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. **Manage them well** so that God's generosity can flow through you. –NLT*

4. Recognize that all ministry equals service or serving.

The word "ministry" literally means "service".

Don't ask, "What is my ministry?" Ask, "What service am I able to render to others and to the Body of Christ that will make them more of a success."

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, there will only be one ministry that will receive commendation (Mt. 25:21-23).

The commendation is not, "Well done! Thou good and faithful apostle!"

The commendation is, "Well done! Thou good and faithful **servant!**"

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

Matthew 25:23

We will not be judged for what ministry we had, but we will be judged on the basis of how faithful we were to do what God asked us to do (I Cor. 3:11-15).

All believers are in the "ministry". All Believers are "ministers" or "servants." All believers are to be "full time ministers", because all of us are full time servants of the Lord.

Ministry is serving.

It is using the talents, gifts and abilities that God has placed in your hands and using them to serve God and others.

The principle governing all ministry or areas of service the principle of abundance.

That is, God gives each of us something in abundance. He gives us more than we need in a certain area or areas. This provides the basis of our ministry. We are to take from that abundance and minister (serve) it to others.

This is how the Body of Christ works. We all have lacks and we all have areas of abundance. We are to look to the body of Christ to help supply what we lack and we are to look to supply that which is lacking in others out of our abundance (II Cor. 8:13-14).

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.

a. The example in Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

God blessed him with more than he personally needed so that he could become a channel of God's blessing to all of the other nations in the world.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:2-3

- b. The example of comfort (II Cor. 1:3-4).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

In order to minister, we receive something from the Lord so that we can give of that something to others. In this case it was the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

- c. Practical examples:

- Money
- Teaching
- Prayer
- Musical Talent

5. Recognize that no ministry is more important than another.

Man judges ones ministry on the basis of external vision (I Sam. 16:7), or that which is seen (II Cor. 4:18).

Even in relation to the natural body, the head and the hands get most of the attention. Our tendency is to think that those members that get the most attention are the most valuable. That is not true in our physical body and that is not true in God’s spiritual body—the Church.

Man’s scale of importance operates on the basis of “What ministry you have”.

God judges ministry on the basis of how faithful you were with what God asked you to do.

- Very Good and Very Faithful
- Good and Faithful
- Sort of Good and Sort of Faithful
- Not so Good and Not so Faithful
- Unjust and Unfaithful

6. Recognize the area of ministry to which the Lord is calling you (Rom. 12:3-5).

This involves some honest self-evaluation:

- a. What am I qualified to do?

- b. What talents and abilities do I possess?
- c. Do I have the needed aptitudes?
- d. What do I enjoy doing?
- e. In what areas is it most natural for me to serve?
- f. Do I get any fulfillment out of doing this?

Usually the will of the Lord is in absolute harmony with the way He has made us and what He wants us to do is exactly what we enjoy doing.

The list of ministries in the Body in Christ is endless. In addition, almost anything that can be done can be turned into a ministry when it is done to reach out to others and serve them.

- Sewing Blankets
- Baking
- Auto Mechanics
- Building Skills
- Fishing

7. Recognize that we will only be as successful as we are willing to sacrificially apply ourselves.

There are two parts to the development of any ministry.

- a. There is God's part. God will always do His part. Not one of us will be able to stand before God on Judgment Day and accuse Him of not doing His part.
- b. There is man's part. God will not do man's part. Many times in our prayers, we ask God to do our part (e.g. "stir us up," "get me out of bed in the morning," etc.).

God part includes:

- a. The kind of ministry that we will have (Gal.1:1).
- b. The sphere of our ministry (Acts 9:15).
- c. The duration of our ministry (Acts 12:1-2, 11).
- d. Supplying the natural and spiritual gifts we need for our ministry (Rom. 12:1-8; I Pet. 4:10).
- e. The ultimate impact or the fruit (I Cor. 3:5-7). God gives the increase.

Man's part includes adding diligence to that which we feel God has revealed to us.

a. Paul gave many admonitions to Timothy regarding his calling.

- Fight a good fight (I Tim. 1:18).

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare...

- Give yourself entirely to it (I Tim. 4:11-16). Prophecy is not magic. We do not automatically fulfill them.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

- Care for it as a stewardship (I Tim. 6:20a).

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust...

- Fan the flame; stir the gift (II Tim. 1:6).

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

- Present yourself to God an approved workman who does not need to be ashamed (II Tim. 2:15).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

b. Proverbs give many admonitions concerning diligence:

- Proverbs 10:4-5

He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.

- Proverbs 12:24

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor.

- Proverbs 13:4

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper and be satisfied. –NLT

c. Jeremiah says it this way, “A curse on him who is slack concerning the Lord’s work” (48:10). Other translations say, “Cursed is the one who does the work of the Lord...

- deceitfully
- negligently
- half-heartedly
- grudgingly

God wants us to have a spirit of excellence in all we do, because our work is reflective of Him.

d. Other admonitions include:

- We must be diligent to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10).
- We are to press toward the mark the high calling in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).
- We are to press into the kingdom (Luke 16:16).
- We are to take the kingdom by force (Matthew 11:12).

e. The example of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

*Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and **mighty in the Scriptures**, came to Ephesus. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being **fervent in spirit**, he spoke and **taught accurately** the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶So he began to **speak boldly** in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, **he greatly helped** those who had believed through grace; ²⁸for he **vigorously refuted** the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.*

God will do His part, we can be sure of that. But God will not do our part. We must draw from the grace of God so that we can do our part.